

TESTIMONY

Senate Workforce Committee & House Committee on Business and Labor

February 20, 2015

Sick leave desperately needs an agriculture exemption:

An exemption is needed for the following reasons:

1. Many farmers use extra workers during harvest. Keeping track of hours for each worker is almost impossible when a farm is using 200 to 300 workers.
2. Our farm uses 70 part-time workers. These workers already receive the benefit of free housing at a huge expense to us.
3. Most of the workers get a bonus of some kind at the end of the season. They would prefer to have this than paid sick leave that they may not get to use. We could not afford to pay both.
4. During packing season, we cannot allow people who are sick to work with food. If they are still able to work, they are transferred to another job so as not to contaminate food.
5. The unethical worker will use paid sick leave used as a paid vacation. The workers do not have to prove that he or she was actually sick. (My wife was a teacher and she knew that some teachers would take a monthly sick day just because they could do it. One teacher said that she had earned the right to do this.)
6. Financially this could be a disaster to most of us. We compete with a global market and cannot set our own prices. California already has lower labor costs and will often bring their product to Oregon at a price that is below our cost. Adding another cost could put us out of business.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bill Case, Owner of Bill Case Farms Inc.